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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [RS](#) [XA](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIA SUPPORTS AFRICAN SOLUTIONS TO AFRICAN
PROBLEMS

Classified By: Ambassador John Beyrle for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

¶1. (C) Summary: African Ambassadors assembled for an April 15 roundtable hosted by the Ambassador argued that despite Russia's limited diplomatic activity in Africa, Moscow's support for the African position in international fora, and African solutions to resolving the region's problems, accorded Russia political influence on the continent. They explained that Moscow's real interest in Africa was economic, and that Russian companies had successfully won mining and construction projects, although Russia was not as effective as other countries in selling products to Africa. They were skeptical of GOR intentions to begin a large-scale development assistance program, and laughed at mention of a recent MFA statement that Russia would deliver \$400 million in aid to Africa once the financial crisis had passed. The Ambassadors encouraged the U.S. and Russia to settle their bilateral differences and work together to effectively address international issues, many of which have a direct impact on Africa. End summary.

Russia Supports African Solutions

¶2. (C) Ambassadors Machage of Kenya, Mutshail of the DR Congo, Wamisho of Ethiopia, Chergui of Algeria, Diallo of Senegal, and Ojo of Nigeria, gathered for an April 15 roundtable hosted by the Ambassador to discuss Russian relations with Africa. Machage explained that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia failed to develop a clear cut policy toward Africa. Russia saw its "fingers burned" in Africa when many of the regimes supported by the Soviet Union collapsed following the end of the Cold War. Economic turmoil in Russia during the 1990s caused it to stay away from Africa as it focused its resources on the CIS. The GOR has recently become more active in Africa, but this remains limited. Despite this situation, Machage thought that Russia could have more political influence on the continent than the U.S. by virtue of the fact that Moscow tends to support the African point of view in international fora. Ethiopia's Wamisho characterized this as Russia "raising its hand with the weak." Machage said that Russia backs African solutions to African problems, and understands that it is incorrect to look at Africa "from above" and treat the continent as a collection of "hotspots." Senegal's Diallo added that the main purpose for his country having an Embassy in Moscow is to have representation in the capital of a permanent member of the UNSC.

¶3. (C) Algeria's Chergui provided an overview of the African Union's efforts to address the continent's problems, and how it has allowed African countries to jointly declare their shared values as opposed to receiving "lessons" from others. He explained the AU's focus on creating regional groupings to resolve conflicts, such as having Zimbabwe's neighbors negotiate a political settlement that led to a unity government. The Ambassadors agreed that such an approach was

favorable to imposing sanctions that harmed only common people and did not touch Mugabe and his allies. For this reason, African countries ask others to respect their positions and the decisions of the AU. (Comment: Although Russia did not come up in this part of the discussion, the implication to the GOR's penchant to take such positions and oppose sanctions was clear.)

Russia's Economic Focus on Africa

¶4. (C) Diallo posited that Russian foreign policy is not directed at all of Africa, but only selected countries where it has economic interests. Machage agreed, adding that Russia was looking toward Africa as one of the regions in which to expand its economic activity. Russia already had inroads in North Africa, where it traditionally had strong political and economic ties, and won construction and railroad contracts. Russia is also involved in hydro-electric projects in DR Congo and mining in South Africa and Angola. While Russia is currently selling mining equipment and other machinery in Africa, it is still well behind Japan, the U.S. and others that produce higher quality products. Furthermore, by failing to provide development assistance to Africa, Russia misses an opportunity to develop goodwill towards its industries, the way the U.S., Japan, and China have. The countries that buy from Russia tend to be those that were close to the Soviet Union.

¶5. (C) Ethiopia's Wamisho said that the sale of natural resources on the world market was a commonality between Russia and Africa. The U.S., in contrast, seeks to sell its

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manufactured products, although not much of it goes to Africa. In contrast, the French, Germans, Chinese, Japanese, and Indians have spent great effort developing African markets for their products.

No Russian AID for Africa

¶6. (C) Diallo said that Russia has no development agency such as USAID, and appears in no hurry to establish one despite promises to do so. Wamisho added that at the last monthly meeting of African Ambassadors, a MFA representative provided an overview of GOR plans to establish a \$2-4 billion international assistance program, of which \$400 million would be earmarked for Africa. When Wamisho conveyed that the MFA official said the program would begin after the international financial crisis had ended, this produced scornful guffaws from the assembled Ambassadors.

Russia and U.S. Must Resolve Differences

¶7. (C) Wamisho urged the U.S. and Russia to work together effectively to address all manner of international problems, such as the Middle East peace process, which have an impact on Africa. Failure to resolve bilateral irritants, such as NATO expansion and missile defense, impact Africa by preventing Russia-U.S. cooperation. If the U.S. and Russia worked better together, Wamisho believed that Russia could follow the U.S. lead in addressing peace and development issues in Africa.

BEYRLE